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Carlie Dawson

California State University, Monterey Bay

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The Importance and Challenges of Self-Reflecting on Identity and Privilege for White Pre-

Service Teachers

Carlie Dawson

California State University, Monterey Bay

Abstract

Whiteness continues to dominate the field of education; yet, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that White teachers are not critically self-aware of their racial identity and the privilege it grants them. White teachers are not challenged to think about the normalcy of whiteness and privilege in education because they have not been properly exposed to subject of whiteness. To better understand if and how White teachers conceptualize and self-reflect on their racial identity and racialized privilege, a survey was distributed to pre-service White, female graduating Liberal Studies students who plan on pursuing a career in education. This senior capstone research project explores the challenges that White teachers face with regards to issues of racial identity and privilege and how prepared, or not, they are by Liberal Studies courses taken at the California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB). Through a review of the literature and a survey with pre-service teachers, the results indicate that pre-service White teachers believe it is important to critically self-reflect on one's racial identity, but they do not feel that the issue of whiteness has been sufficiently addressed in the curriculum.

Introduction & Background

Race is a complex construct that remains relevant in society and throughout the K-16 education. Race is pertinent and central in all lives, no matter one's racial identity. The authority of racism makes the concept of race difficult to ignore, though some racial groups may deny the influence of racism or be unaware of its presence in individual life.

Contemporary society has been moving beyond discriminatory attitudes and the oppressive nature of our past as a White dominated nation. The Obama victory appeared to be a great testament to just how far our nation has come, moving beyond race and electing a Black man into the highest post of political power. These comforting racial advancements, however, make people all too ready to forget the deepening crisis of oppression and racism in the present United States (Omi & Winant, 2014).

A Television reporter once asked Malcolm X to comment on the progress of the Civil Rights Movement. He criticizes and negates any acknowledgment of progression, stating:

If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, there's no progress. If you pull it all the way out that's not progress. Progress is healing the wound that the blow made. And they haven't even pulled the knife out much less heal the wound. They won't even admit the knife is there (Finifinito, 2011, p. 1).

As long as the knife remains, progression will not be made. Today, the “knife” represents racism, discrimination, and the oppressive acts of White citizens that negatively affect people of color. Racism continues to be a taboo topic in modern White society, despite the fact that structural forms of racial inequity still persist and in many cases have worsened. Racism is embedded in the fabric of American society, yet aside from White Supremacy groups, most White people do not claim to be racist. Even those apart of White Supremacy groups would argue they are not “racist”, but rather “nationalistic!” Despite denial and negation of the individual racist, institutional racism prevails in dominant culture (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV,

2016). Further examined, this is perhaps because most oppression is not viewed as oppression to the offender. Oppression is rationalized as a series of past injustices, and therefore, rarely critically self-examined by the oppressive racial groups. Many people in the United States see racial oppression as part of our nations problematic past, but Omi and Winant (2014) argue that with this mentality “we are rapidly evolving into a truly colorblind society” (p. 2).

Colorblindness is a concept that affirms White people's desire to see others in a deracialized context, not as people whose racialized identities have shaped their perspectives and ultimately their existence. This is likely because White's rarely view themselves as racialized beings.

Whiteness scholars assert that this unquestioned need to perceive everyone equally non-racialized is a foundation of racism in present-day society. “Othering” non-White racial groups allow Whites to disconnect themselves from the issues, viewing race issues as “out there” (Howard, 1999). If one does not self-reflect and view them self as a White nationalist, nor a person of color then they believe they are unaffected by racism.

In attempts to understand the racialized components of education, scholars have examined White teacher beliefs and perceptions concerning their own racial identity, and the ever-expanding demographic gap between students and educators (King, 1991). The demographic gap or diversity gap refers to the disproportion of White teachers and students of color. Eighty-three percent of the United States teaching population is White (U.S Department of Education, 2017). In comparison, 51 percent of all 2012 elementary and secondary public students were White (U.S Department of Education, 2016). With the disproportion of White teachers in education, many suggest a need for a critical analysis of teachers own racial identity and the implication it may have on their teaching profession. In particular, how might their

examinations of racial identity and racism influence their teaching? (Hrabowski & Sanders, 2015)

Landsman and Lewis (2006) believe that the responsibility of educating topics concerning race and racism fall on the racial group that does the most educating. This cannot be effectively achieved if White teachers refuse to admit that racism pervades our education system, are unwilling to engage in topics of race, and hold the belief that racial issues are only a problem for the minorities who are afflicted.

This study will analyze White racial identity in society and its presence in education. The rationale for this study calls into question an education system as a White dominated profession. White teachers are teaching increasingly diverse student populations, yet, matters of race, racism, and privilege are often negated, misinterpreted, and considered insignificant to most White teachers due to the lack of critical self-reflection and recognition of their own racial identity.

In hope of understanding how White teachers conceptualize their racial identity, this senior capstone research will examine the nature of oppression and privilege in society, as well as various challenges White people face when confronted with topics of racism and privilege, due to their lack of exposure to such issues. This study will investigate what factors of White identity make it challenging for White teachers to engage in racialized matters, such as White privilege, and probe how pre-service teachers are being prepared to tackle such topics and the importance of doing so.

In order to support my research on the importance and challenges of self-reflection for White pre-service teachers, I have created a series of research questions that intend to seek the answer to and support this project. The primary research questions I have proposed are: What are

the challenges White pre-service teachers face when self-reflecting on identity and privilege? Why is it important for White pre-service teachers to self-reflect on identity and privilege? My secondary research questions are: *(1) What does the research say about the importance and challenges of Self-Reflecting on Identity and Privilege for White pre-service teachers? (2) Why is it a challenge to prepare White pre-service teachers to self-reflect on identity and privilege? (What has not been done?) (3) Are there teacher preparation courses that prepare White pre-service teachers to self-reflect on identity and privilege? If there are, how do they prepare pre-service teachers? (4) Why are White pre-service teachers not adequately prepared to self-reflect on identity and privilege?* These questions will be discussed during the survey results and findings section of this paper.

I will begin in the following section with a review of the current literature that depicts a brief history of White superiority in society. I will also review what the research reveals regarding other various concepts linked to White identity as well as White teacher identity.

Literature Review

The United States of America's current society is founded on ideologies that support the superiority of the White race over non-White races. Race categorization is a social construct created by Whites as a method to create social and cultural distance (Hays & Chang, 2003). White social domination is a paradigm created from the patterns of our nation's history. Further, this paradigm is a structure of power that many White people unknowingly enter into.

White identity is closely interlaced with the expansion of racism and racial oppression in the United States. Scholars Hays and Chang (2003) define oppression as a societal power imbalance where a dominant social groups abuse of power is reinforced by society. Despite the fact that slavery ended a century and a half ago, White superiority remains ingrained in

American Culture. This inherent superiority has been used to justify crimes against indigenous peoples and non-Whites for centuries (Jensen, 2005). Many scholars assert that the racial inequality between Blacks and Whites is the continuing result of the injustices which began during slavery. Historically, the start of this nation valued anyone who was White, male, and owned property. Years that followed lawfully reduced African slaves to three-fifths of a person whilst the White male in power represented the standard for a whole person. These few brief examples expose the universal principles Europeans and White Americans held concerning the history of White Superiority/Black inferiority (King, 1991). These attitudes caused the enslavement of Africans and were warranted as necessary and permissible during this period.

Although these are merely heinous past examples, and no White person currently owns slaves, we cannot deny the present perpetuation that makes racism as formidable as it is today. The colonization of third world nations, neighborhood isolation limiting Black mobility, and job discrimination that restricts the upward progress of workers of color are just some of the components to list that partially capture the image of White superiority (Leonardo, 2013). King (1991) reported that from an opposing viewpoint, some perceive racism and social dominance as merely constructs created by people of the past, and fail to acknowledge current Whites as a racial class that continues to secure superiority in almost all facets of social life. Yet, to date, the concept of superiority explains the racialized disparities of social stature, employment, education, housing, and distribution of wealth. This fundamental superiority paints a picture of “a society in which racial victimization is normative” (King, 1991, p. 139).

A society that saturates White superiority makes White privilege possible. When analyzing oppressed social groups, the oppressive groups are often overlooked or presented in a distorted way. One cannot address the disadvantageous oppression of people of color without

addressing the advantages it gave to Whites. In the notable piece *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, Peggy McIntosh (1988), defines her idea of White privilege as a notion that Whites are predisposed to unearned advantages from birth. The structure of White advantages occurs through the high valuation of white or light skin color, hair texture, culture, and language. McIntosh (1988) who struggled herself to conceptualize her racial identity shared in her text 50 examples of privilege that were most strikingly advantageous to her as a White female. Common examples included having her race widely represented on television and in magazines, choosing “flesh” colored bandages and having them more or less match her skin tone, going to a hair salon and knowing that the stylist would know how to cut her White textured hair, and feeling overall welcome and “normal” in public, institutional, and social life. McIntosh (1988) noted that even after self-reflecting on her identity as a White woman, she frequently forgot about the aspects of her own privilege. It was not until she wrote them down in a comprehensive list, that she was able to explicitly reflect and face her privilege. McIntosh (1988) attempted to expose her privilege through writing this article.

These unearned privileges also grant White people an unknowingly strong sense of racial belonging to society. This racial belonging is a normalized structure of power in society that McIntosh (1988) highlights, is a paradigm that many White people unknowingly enter into. Similar to McIntosh’s (1988) assertions, DiAngelo (2011) claims Whiteness is deeply embedded in U.S culture. Not only does privilege explain disparities in wealth and education, but it also is evident that White racial image is reflected in all aspects of life. From standards of beauty, superheroes, and role models, to historical icons in textbooks, Whiteness is universally valued. The appreciation of cultural Whiteness is inherently passed down from generation to generation through social institutions, classrooms, family, and the media (Adair, 2008). Leonardo (2013)

similarly noted that one complexity of Whiteness is that the supplemented privilege is inherently granted even if Whites are unaware, because of the normalcy and frequency of Whiteness in dominant U.S culture.

The term “White privilege” in contemporary society is a complex social phenomenon that troubles most White people who have not been previously engaged with the idea. A White person who has never self-reflected on their racial identity may have a difficult time wrestling with the reality that they too hold unearned racial privilege. Reactions to this recognition are often met with opposition and are regularly contested with denial, guilt, distress, and hostility. “Any serious challenge to the status quo that calls the racial privilege into question inevitably challenges the self-identity of White people who have internalized these ideological justifications” (King, 1991, p. 135).

From the *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, DiAngelo (2011) further examines these types of reactions and emphasizes that they are not uncommon. She supports assertions about White people's inability to engage effectively with topics of racism and privilege, due to environmental racial insulation. First, DiAngelo (2011) declares that White people live segregated lives, free of race-based stress. The United States insulates White people; providing racial comfort through normalizing the overrepresentation of Whiteness. White people living in a White-dominated society are rarely asked to consider their racial roles in society. This occurs at the cost of lowering Whites tolerance for racial stress. They receive little authentic information about privilege and racism and are thus unequipped with how to handle such difficult notions. Furthermore, DiAngelo (2011) hypothesizes that in a White-dominated society, the insulation and paradigm of Whiteness are what has become normative. The absence of people of color is

what defines life for some Whites as normative or good. The “good” neighborhoods or “good” schools are almost always conceptualized as White.

From White insulation, the notion of White fragility can be better understood. DiAngelo (2011) describes White fragility as a state of being in which racial stress triggers a range of defensive moves. Racial stress for White people can be understood as any disturbance outside of what is racially accustomed. In the figure below, DiAngelo (2011) identifies a variety of these racial triggers that consequently lead to a state of White Fragility.

Cause of Racial Stress	Effect on Aspect of White Identity
Suggesting that a White person's viewpoint comes from a racialized frame of reference	Challenge to objectivity
People of color talking directly about their own racial perspectives	Challenge to White taboos on talking openly about race
People of color choosing not to protect the racial feelings of white people in regards to race	Challenge to White racial expectations and need/entitlement to racial comfort
People of color not being willing to tell their stories or answer questions about their racial experiences	Challenge to the expectation that people of color will serve White people
A fellow White person not providing agreement with one's racial perspective	Challenge to White solidarity
Receiving feedback that one's behavior had a racist impact	Challenge to White racial innocence
Suggesting that group membership is significant	Challenge to individualism
An acknowledgment that access is unequal between racial groups	Challenge to meritocracy
Being presented with a person of color in a position of leadership	Challenge to White authority
Being presented with information about other racial groups through, for example, movies in which people of color drive the action but are not in stereotypical roles, or multicultural education	Challenge to White centrality

(Figure 1, DiAngelo, 2011).

Whites confronted with such triggers are often at a loss for how to respond effectively because of the insulation of their racial environment and lack of understanding and critical self-reflection of their White racial identity. DiAngelo (2011) stresses that racial comfort for Whites ultimately means racism will not be faced head-on. Most Whites have not been trained to effectively conceptualize themselves as White racialized beings, and that produces their views of racism and oppression to be unquestioningly distorted.

From this insulation, one can better understand White teachers' inability to recognize, comprehend, and effectively self-reflect on such topics. The current teacher population is culturally and racially isolated and therefore, uncritical of the normalized perceptions and assumptions that accompany White racial identity (Howard, 2016). Ladson-Billings (1995) explains that White middle-class pre-service teachers lack the understanding of their own racial identity and often perceive themselves as free from a race. Further examined, this mentality is detrimental because White teachers may make a commitment to educational equity but are unaware and unable to critically think about issues of race and the implications their unchallenged racial identity may have on their practice.

White teachers may oppose these notions and perceive the idea of privilege as a threat to their self-concept and even their teaching philosophies. Gay and Kirkland (2003) assert that White teachers' initial exposure to the idea of privilege may cause feelings of guilt. Similar to DiAngelo's (2011) affirmation of White Fragility, the barrier of guilt due to past oppression may limit a White teachers' ability to critically reflect on their racial identity and race-related issues. This awareness of guilt is a way for White teachers to assume they are working towards racial equality when in fact they "do not examine the causes, motivations, depths, and manifestations of their guilt, least of all how to move beyond it" (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 1). Unexamined

assertions, resistance, and inability to engage in such issues can be damaging to the teacher and the students. White identity and privilege are important issues that teachers must be able to critically conceptualize and self-reflect on. White teachers who are not able to self-reflect on the ways in which privilege and racism permeate their lives and the lives of their students, contribute further to a societal paradigm that favors some and oppresses others (Kendall, 2006).

Methods and Procedures

To better conceptualize the challenges White pre-service teacher face when Self-reflecting on Identity and privilege I contacted graduating White, female Liberal Studies majors who plan to pursue careers in education. Information was collected from a survey of my peers who agreed to participate in my capstone research (See Appendix A). Questions were created, drafted, and then sent out via student email on March 26, 2018. This survey was sent to 15 subjects and 13 responses were collected on April 2, 2018. My survey initially asked about my subjects' identity. Three questions were created to determine my participants were the correct sample of White, female future educators. I then provided a statement from McIntosh's (1988) definition of White privilege and asked my subjects on a scale 1-5, how they agreed with the statement. This was intended to initially gauge whether or not my participants felt they had any racialized privilege. I used this scaling method throughout my survey where 1 is always determined as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree. My survey asked pre-service teachers to critically reflect on 3 Liberal Studies courses taken here at CSUMB: LS 380: Teaching for Social Change, LS 391: Diversity in Educational Settings, and LS 394s: Multicultural Literature Child & Young Adults Service Learning. The intent of asking these questions was to find out whether or not these courses educated White students on topics of race, racism, identity, and privilege. Additionally, I wanted to conclude how prepared the pre-service teachers are, to engage future

students in such topics after taking these courses. Since the population surveyed are graduating Liberal Studies seniors, I inferred that all subjects had either previously taken these courses or were currently enrolled in these courses. The questions were intended to uncover their preexisting views about their own White racial identity, implications on their future teaching, their awareness of White privilege, comfortability engaging in topics of race, racism, and privilege, their thoughts about the importance of doing so, and their level of preparedness to teach such topics to future students. To generalize the content, subjects were asked a series of questions intended to help the answer the initial secondary research questions posed in the Introduction and Background section. This survey sought to answer the secondary research questions. Ultimately, the survey was designed to support research, identify the importance and expose the challenges White teachers face when self-reflecting of their racial identity and privilege.

Results and Findings

After examining the applicable literature results and survey data, the findings exposed how CSUMB, White pre-service teachers regard their racial identity and privilege and why it may be challenging for some White pre-service teachers to self-reflect on such topics.

In sum, CSUMB survey results aligned with similar research studies done on pre-service teachers regarding their conceptualizations of race, equity, and privilege (King 1991). The following paragraphs will outline one of these scholarly studies and concurrently provide a cohesive response my secondary research question:

(1) What does the research say about the importance and challenges of self-reflecting on Identity and Privilege for White pre-service teachers?

The literature previously discussed aimed to deconstruct how White teachers conceptualize race. In a qualitative study from Joyce King (1991), published in her literature article *Dysconscious Racism*, King (1991) presents a collection of responses from students of teacher education. King (1991) intended to evaluate student thoughts on racial status and social inequity. Her Social Foundations course sought not to teach the traditional pedagogy for the oppressed, but rather an exploration of a liberatory pedagogy for the elite. The course is described as an opportunity to challenge students' "taken-for-granted ideological positions and identities and their unquestioned acceptance of cultural belief systems which undergird racial inequity" (King, 1991 p. 134). Approaches directly addressed societal oppression and student beliefs about inequity. Most of the student participants had limited knowledge of societal inequity and were unaware of how their subjective identities played a role in the current social order. Her students critically responded to questions about how and why societal racial inequity exists. Responses were classified into 3 categories. Category I responses justified present racial inequity as the result of slavery, Category II attributed it to the lack of equal opportunity for people of color, and Category III described racial inequity as a part of the framework of a society in which racism is normative.

The 35 total responses were divided by Category I (11) and Category II (24). King (1991) concluded that students explained their understanding of racial inequity in limited ways and failed to recognize White peoples' beliefs that have justified and facilitated societal oppression. Both Category I and Category II responses inherently defend the notion of White Privilege. Results acknowledged slavery and oppression but ignored the advantages it gave to White people. These findings are consistent with DiAngelo's (2011) claims that Whites have a distorted way of viewing their own identity and privilege in relation to race and racism. White teachers

conceptualize race differently demonstrating that they have not been effectively taught to appropriately cognize such matters. It is challenging to engage White teachers in self-reflection on race and privilege when they have not been previously equipped to do so.

Teachers have not been effectively taught to see White privilege. McIntosh (1988) asserts that society shields White people to not see privilege for what it is.

I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks (McIntosh, 1998, p. 1).

McIntosh's (1988) self-reflection on racial privilege align with DiAngelo's (2011) assertion that confronting race and privilege for White's is challenging because "Whites have not had to build the cognitive or affective skills or develop the stamina that would allow for constructive engagement across racial divides" (p. 57).

The following section will discuss the results of a study conducted on CSUMB White pre-service teachers and will seek answers to the remaining secondary questions. After analyzing the data collected from the survey, the results indicate that 100 percent of the CSUMB subjects racially identified as White, female, and 100 percent responded that they plan on pursuing a career in education.

(2) Why is it a challenge to prepare White pre-service teachers to self-reflect on identity and privilege? (What has not been done?)

The data from the survey indicates that 84.6 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their K-12 education did not adequately expose the concept and implications of White privilege (See table 1). Yet, almost the same amount, 84.7 percent, responded that they agree or strongly agree it is necessary to address and take responsibility for their White identity (See Table 2), and 76.9

percent felt that by confronting their White identity, it would positively benefit their future students regarding discussions of slavery and racism (See Table 3). It is most evidently challenging, however, because when asked to reflect on their own education, almost 70% percent of subjects agreed or strongly agreed that they never questioned their own White identity when learning about issues of racism and slavery (See Table 4). This is likely because most subjects had not been properly prepared to do so. Therefore, 58.3 percent agreed or strongly agreed that it is difficult for them to engage their peers in topics of racism and privilege (See Table 5).

(3) Are there teacher preparation courses that prepare White pre-service teachers to self-reflect on identity and privilege? If there are, how do they prepare pre-service teachers?

The following subsequent paragraphs outline results from the given CSUMB survey. I provided the same set of statements listed for each Liberal Studies course, asking subjects answer with yes or no.

LS 380: Teaching for Social Change

Ninety-two percent of subjects felt that this course made them recognize and conceptually think about racial groups other than their own (See Table A-1); whereas 84.6% felt that it made them recognize and conceptually reflect on their White identity (See Table A-2). One hundred percent felt this course increased their awareness of the societal impacts of racism (See Table A-3); whereas 92.3% felt it increased their awareness of the societal impacts of White privilege (See Table A-4). Sixty-nine percent felt this course made them feel more prepared to effectively engage students in their own racial identities (See Table A-5), and 84.6% felt this course made them feel more prepared to engage in topics of racism and privilege (See Table A-6).

LS 391: Diversity in Educational Settings

Eighty-two percent of the subjects felt that this course made them recognize and conceptually think about racial groups other than their own (See Table B-1) and equally, eighty-two percent felt that it made them recognize and reflect on their White identity (See Table B-2). Eighty-two percent felt this course increased their awareness of the societal impacts of racism (See Table B-3); whereas 72.7% felt it increased their awareness of the societal impacts of White privilege (See Table B-4). Almost sixty percent felt this course made them feel more prepared to effectively engage students in their own racial identities (See Table B-5), similarly, 54.5% felt that this course made them feel more prepared to engage in topics of racism and privilege (See Table B-6).

LS 394s: Multicultural Literature Child & Young Adults Service Learning

Results from this course indicated that 84.6% of the subjects felt that this course made them recognize and conceptually think about racial groups other than their own (See Table C-1), whereas 69.2% felt that it made them recognize and reflect on their White identity (See Table C-2), and 69.2% felt this course increased their awareness of the societal impacts of racism (See Table C-3). Sixty-one percent felt that it increased their awareness of the societal impacts of White privilege (See Table C-4), while 46.2% felt this course made them feel more prepared to effectively engage students in their own racial identities (See Table C-5). Only 61.5% of the subjects felt this course made them feel more prepared to engage in topics of racism and privilege (See Table C-6).

Overall, only thirty-eight percent agreed or strongly agreed that they had taken enough courses here at CSUMB to prepare them to work effectively with students of color (See Table 6).

(4) Why are White pre-service teachers not adequately prepared to self-reflect on identity and privilege?

From the three CSUMB courses included in the survey, there are few offered opportunities for pre-service teachers to critically self-reflect on their racial identity and privilege. Results show that more students felt they were learning about racial groups other than their own and the societal impacts of racism, than the awareness of White privilege and their own racial identity.

The last two questions of the survey were voluntarily written responses. The first question asked was: *Do you feel it is important to prepare pre-service white teachers to confront their own identity and effectively combat the notions of racial privilege in the classroom? Why or why not? (See Appendix A)*

Six responses were collected from this question. All subjects that responded emphasized the importance of preparation. Subject A believed it is extremely important yet thought she had not been effectively prepared to teach students, “let alone when factoring in race/ethnicity/etc.” (Subject A, survey respondent, 13 March 2018). Subject B highlighted the importance while also making connections to the cyclical ways in which race and privilege are viewed throughout education. She challenged her lack of previous exposure saying if not engaged in such topics as a future educator she “will be going through the same motions of ignoring racial comments within my own education & not successfully addressing and conversing these issues with students” (Subject B, survey respondent, 13 March 2018). Subject C also addressed the fact that lack of awareness and self-reflection in such topics will ensure that our educational paradigm “will never change” (Subject C, survey respondent, 13 March 2018). Subject D acknowledged that White pre-service teachers will be educating non-White students and if teachers do not address

their own identities and privilege it will create a “disconnect” for student learning (Subject D, survey respondent, 13 March 2018). Subject E discussed questioning her own White identity in order to better understand the role of a teacher in a societal context. She powerfully asserted that we cannot teach students “that life is all equal”. Education should help learners question and be critical of “our own identity as white individuals” (Subject E, survey respondent, 13 March 2018). Subject F provided a cohesive response maintaining the importance of preparing White pre-service teachers to confront their own identity in order to work effectively with future students. She discussed White teachers’ ability to grasp racial privilege stating the inability to engage in such topics will not happen if White teachers “are not willing to figure out” their identity and its effects (Subject F, survey respondent, 13 March 2018).

The last question asked was: *Do you feel the courses you have taken here at CSUMB have done an adequate job of addressing whiteness and the impact it can have on students? (See Appendix A)*

Six responses were collected from this question. Responses to this question were less cohesive, more varied, and more complex than the previous question asked. Subject A believed she was not prepared at all. When and if Whiteness was discussed in education, it was in a way that was threatening to her. She highlighted the importance multicultural studies but noted that “other races were preferred” in these courses. She declared that White is also a culture that “should be recognized at least a little in multicultural lit or one of the other classes” (Subject A, survey respondent, 13 March 2018). Subject B contends that one course at CSUMB has done an adequate job of addressing Whiteness and the impact it can have on students. She powerfully insisted that no course other than LS 380 taught by Miguel Lopez “challenged me to examine my language and actions as a white woman” and how those actions could possibly have implications

on future students (Subject B, survey respondent, 13 March 2018). Subject C noted an interesting limitation of this survey. She declared that courses may prepare one differently depending on who is doing the teaching. She recounted a conversation with her peers about the LS 394 course where her professor did an “adequate” job of addressing Whiteness, and her peers who took the course with a different professor had a very different experience confronting Whiteness. Subject C also noted that her LS 391 course “didn’t touch on whiteness”; whereas her peers who took the course with a different professor had a more “impactful” experience addressing Whiteness (Subject C, survey respondent, 13 March 2018). Subject D simply left a “yes” response with no further explanation as to how (Subject D, survey respondent, 13 March 2018). Subject E believed she was also not completely prepared but provided no further explanation. (Subject E, survey respondent, 13 March 2018). Subject F believed the courses she took had “done a good job” of addressing Whiteness and its impact on students and education (Subject F, survey respondent, 13 March 2018).

Discussion

The responses gathered ultimately support the hypothesis of my research. Although measuring preparation is conceptual, results concluded that participants unanimously felt that exploring their racial identity and privilege was an important part of their education for themselves as White females as well as their careers as future teachers, yet their K-12 and CSUMB college education has not adequately prepared them to critically self-reflect on such issues.

Subjects surveyed feel unprepared to engage future students in topics of racialized identity and privilege because their own schooling never challenged them to do so. “Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that

when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow “them” to be more like “us” (McIntosh, 1988, p.1). This miseducation and lack of critical self-reflection of race allow White teachers to disconnect themselves from the issues, allowing them to inherently feel as if they are above the problem. This lack of personal connection to the issues gives White teachers a distorted outlook and a type of “savior mentality” that McIntosh (1988) discusses. However, no one is free from race or the issues and privileges attached. DiAngelo (2011) asserts that all are accountable for either continuing or altering this system of oppression. The cyclical nature of our education system continues to leave White students unquestioning of their racialized roles in society. This is perpetuating a paradigm that favors Whites and put others at a disadvantage. By not engaging and self-reflecting on the ways in which White privilege operates in society and education, we continue to enable participation in the oppression of others.

Results gathered from the survey regarding the three courses help bring subjects awareness and impact of racial privilege but failed to conceptually link that awareness to their reflection of their individual White identity. I believe the Liberal Studies Department offers courses that engage students in issues of multiculturalism which embodies concepts of Whiteness, however, not in a way that makes White students build an awareness of their racial identity. Our CSUMB education exposes White students to the societal impacts of racism and White privilege but lacks the discourse that would make these students critically self-reflect on the role they play in this society. White privilege is being taught as a conceptual concept but is not being effectively addressed on a deeper, personal level in regards to the implications it may have working in the field of education. Furthermore, as future teachers, we must examine the roles we play in inequitably constructed Eurocentric institutions. Reflecting on her own education, McIntosh (1988) declares “my schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an

oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will” (p.1). There is a deficit in the way CSUMB White pre-service teachers are being taught to conceptualize and self-reflect on their white identity, privilege, and issues of racism.

Recommendations

Therefore, I recommend an education for White teachers that will expose the unquestioned nature of White superiority that saturates and inherently shapes assumptions and perceptions. Based on my findings, White privilege in pre-service teacher education is not being adequately addressed in a way that makes students self-reflect on their racial identities’. White teachers must be challenged in the ways they perceive racial inequities. White teachers should be effectively educated on the past and present White social superiority that permeates not only our education system, but contemporary society. DiAngelo (2011) demands a change must be made and claims that existent oppression is “ultimately a white problem and the burden for interrupting it belongs to white people” (p. 66). White future educators cannot effectively engage in significant deliberation cross-racially and culturally without first “doing the work of personal transformation” (Howard, 2016, p. 4). White teachers cannot challenge the discriminatory and oppressive nature of this education system without first unraveling the dysconscious residue of White social dominance that still exists in thoughts, habits, and actions. “Prospective teachers need both an intellectual understanding of schooling and inequity as well as self-reflective, transformative emotional growth experiences” (King, 1991, p. 134). There is a need for a curriculum that prepares White teachers to self-reflect on their identity, privilege, and role in society as a racialized being.

Problems and Limitations

I encountered a few problems and limitations with this study. Reviewing my data, I recognized that my subjects may have had various understandings of race and privilege. This could have varied my responses and ultimately led to different comprehensive meanings of “preparedness” in such matters. Preparedness is a difficult concept to measure as one pre-service teachers’ idea of prepared may be vastly different than another.

Another limitation was affirmed as I was analyzing my data and reading through responses gathered. When inquiring data about the classes and level of preparedness it did not occur to ask my subjects who taught their course. This may have altered my results, as different professors may teach the content of the same course very different. I also believe small sample size was a limitation of my study. I distributed this survey to 15 graduating, white female pre-service teachers, and received 13 responses back at the end of a 2-week period.

Without these limitations, my survey may have provided more evidence as to the level of preparedness and importance of educating White pre-service teachers to self-reflect on identity and privilege. Lastly, race, racism, and privilege are complicated constructs to grasp, and although my study reaffirmed my belief that CSUMB pre-service teachers do not feel underprepared, my survey did not truly expose why. Therefore, it was challenging to seek the answers to my secondary research questions, (2) *Why is it a challenge to prepare White pre-service teachers to self-reflect on identity and privilege? (What has not been done?)* (4) *Why are White pre-service teachers not adequately prepared to self-reflect on identity and privilege?*

Conclusion

It is a challenge to engage White teachers in self-reflection of their racial identity and privilege because they have not been previously confronted to do so. White’s live in an insulated

environment where they are rarely asked to ponder their Whiteness. Therefore, White pre-service teachers often confuse self-reflection with their distant conceptualizations of inequity and race. This may be because there are little opportunities offered for guided self-reflection in regards to White racial identity and privilege. Simply introducing these issues does not ensure critical self-reflection. The normalcy of Whiteness as the default race in society ensures White people will always maintain a sense of belonging even when they are unaware of it. It is not surprising that White teachers have a difficult time understanding a racial identity that often goes unnamed and unmarked. It is even more challenging to grapple with the idea that this unwitting racial identity may have implications for the future of education. Moreover, it may be challenging for White pre-service teachers to self-reflect on their own identities and perceptions because they do not want to face their thoughts and biases about racial superiority and inequity (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). However, this critical reflection is necessary in order for future educators to be effective and critically aware of the ways in which they fit into an unequal system.

The research and findings support the fact that White privilege in pre-service teacher education is not being adequately addressed in a way that makes students self-reflect on their racial identities'. The data collected reveals that CSUMB pre-service teachers recognize the importance of engaging in their own racial identity and privilege, while simultaneously stating they have not been adequately prepared to do so. Liberating Whites through the process of self-reflection is important for those who have never before questioned their status within this framework of society and education. It is imperative White pre-service teachers critically self-reflect on their identity and privilege so that they may better conceptualize their role as racialized future educators. Teachers racial identities have ramifications on the students they teach. If they are unable to reflect and critically understand the whiteness and privilege they possess, they will

be unknowingly hindering themselves in regards to their roles in society, and their future students.

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Appendix A

CSUMB Pre-Service Teacher Survey

Scale 1-5
1= strongly disagree
5= strongly agree

I racially identify as White

YES/NO

I identify as female

YES/NO

I plan to pursue a career in education

YES/ NO

Below is a general definition of white privilege taken from Peggy McIntosh's *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*:

"I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks."

On a scale of 1-5, do you agree with this statement?

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

I feel it is necessary to address head on and take responsibility for my White identity

1

2

3

4

5

I feel guilty about my White identity and the privilege I hold

1

2

3

4

5

I feel that confronting my White identity will positively benefit the students that I will teach when discussing topics of slavery and racism

1

2

3

4

5

I feel my k-12 education did not adequately expose White privilege and its implications

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5
Strongly agree

I feel it is difficult to engage my peers in topics of racism and privilege

1

2

3

4

5

I feel my White identity is just easier to ignore because it makes me uncomfortable

1

2

3

4

5

I feel that when learning about racism and slavery I never questioned my own White identity

1

2

3

4

5

CLASSES (1-5 scale) If you have not taken these courses, or are not currently enrolled in these courses please leave the answers blank.

LS 380: Teaching for Social Change

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about racial groups other than my own

YES/NO

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about my White identity

YES/NO

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of White privilege

YES/NO

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of racism

YES/NO

This course made me feel more prepared to effectively engage students in their own racial identities

YES/NO

This course made me feel more prepared to engage in topics of racism and privilege

YES/NO

LS 391: Diversity in Educational Settings

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about racial groups other than my own

YES/NO

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about my White identity

YES/NO

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of White privilege

YES/NO

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of racism

YES/NO

This course made me feel more prepared to effectively engage students in their own racial identities

YES/NO

This course made me feel more prepared to engage in topics of racism and privilege

YES/NO

LS 394s: Multicultural Literature Child & Young Adult

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about racial groups other than my own

YES/NO

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about my White identity

YES/NO

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of White privilege

YES/NO

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of racism

YES/NO

This course made me feel more prepared to effectively engage students in their own racial identities

YES/NO

This course made me feel more prepared to engage in topics of racism and privilege

YES/NO

I feel I have taken enough courses here at CSUMB to prepare me to work effectively with students of color

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

VOLUNTARY- Please provide a written response to the following questions:

Do you feel it is important to prepare pre-service white teachers to confront their own identity and effectively combat the notions of racial privilege in the classroom? Why or why not?

Do you feel the courses you have taken here at CSUMB have done an adequate job of addressing whiteness and the impact it can have on students?

I feel my k-12 education did not adequately expose White privilege and its implications

13 responses

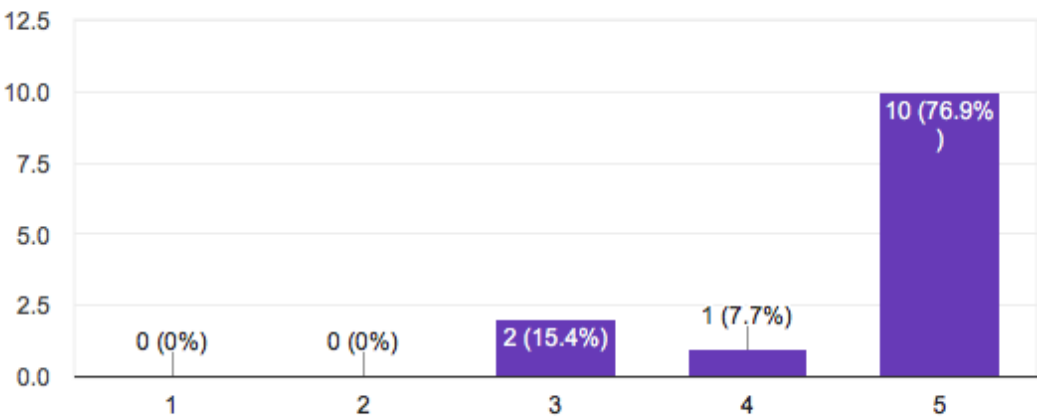


Table 1

I feel it is necessary to address head on and take responsibility for my White identity

13 responses

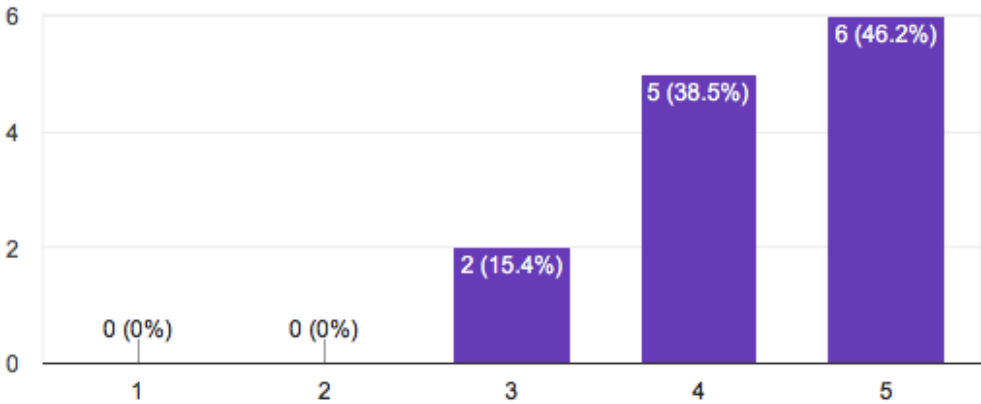


Table 2

I feel that confronting my White identity will positively benefit the students that I will...g topics of slavery and racism

13 responses

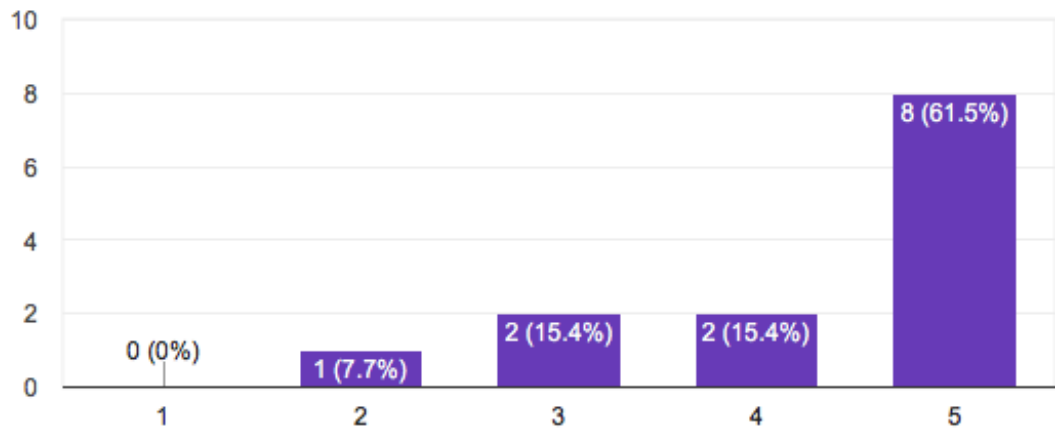


Table 3

I feel that when learning about racism and slavery I never questioned my own White identity

13 responses

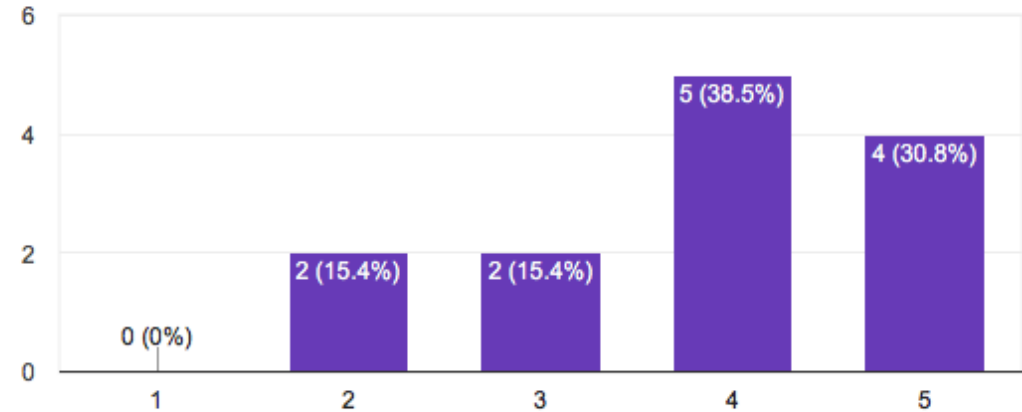


Table 4

I feel it is difficult to engage my peers in topics of racism and privilege

12 responses

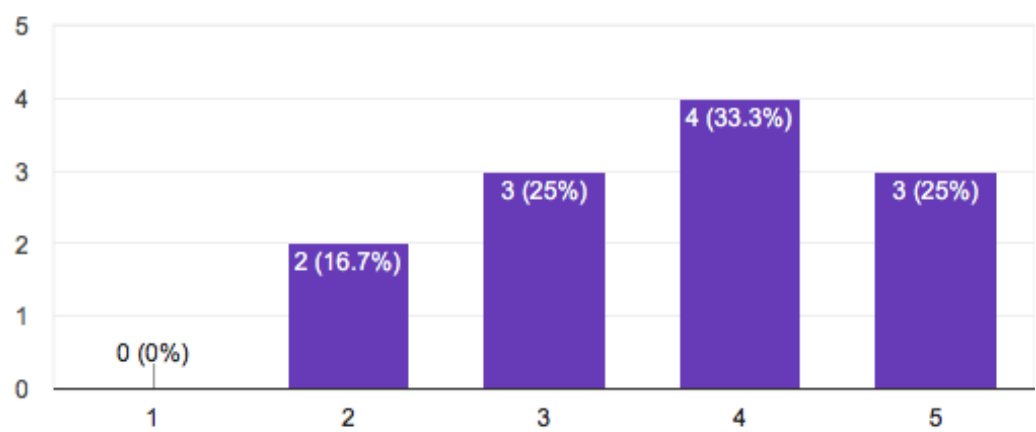


Table 5

LS 380: Teaching for Social Change

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about racial groups other than my own

13 responses

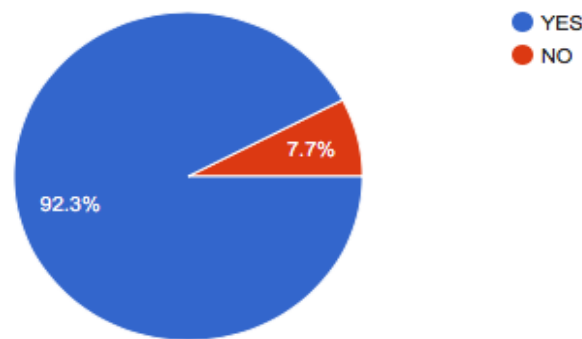


Table A-1

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about my White identity

13 responses

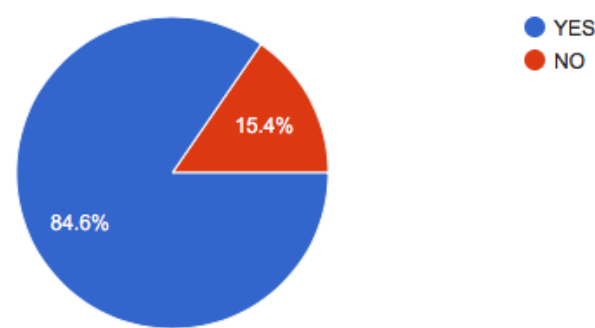


Table A-2

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of racism

13 responses

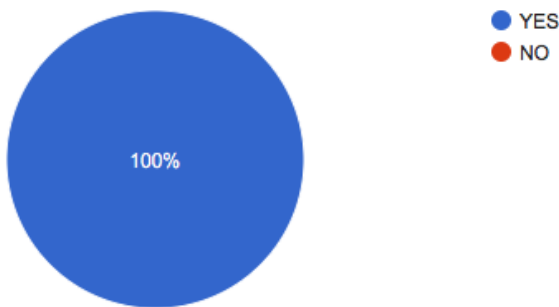


Table A-3

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of White privilege

13 responses

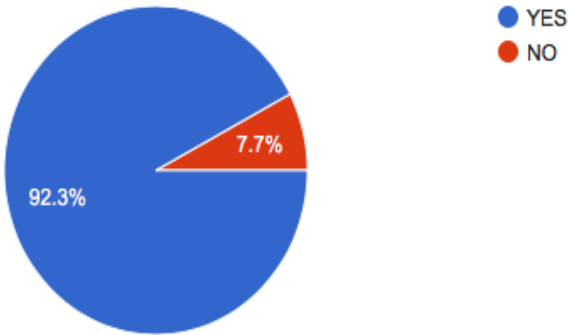


Table A-4

This course made me feel more prepared to effectively engage students in their own racial identities

13 responses

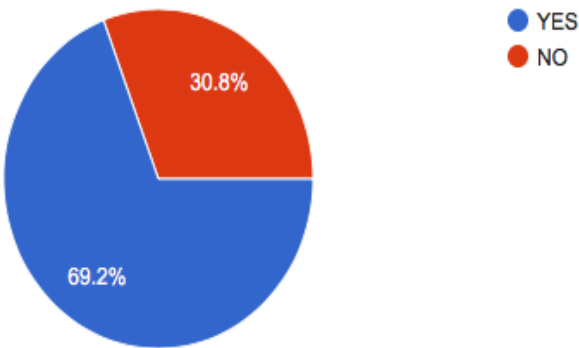


Table A-5

This course made me feel more prepared to engage in topics of racism and privilege

13 responses

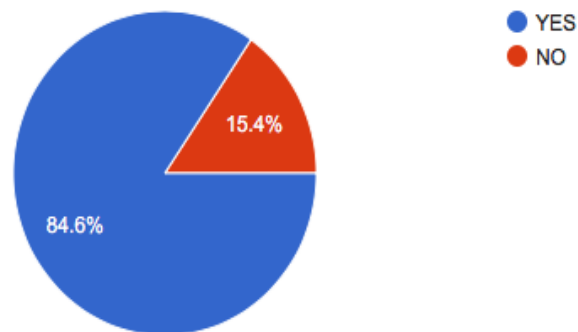


Table A-6

LS 391:

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about racial groups other than my own

11 responses

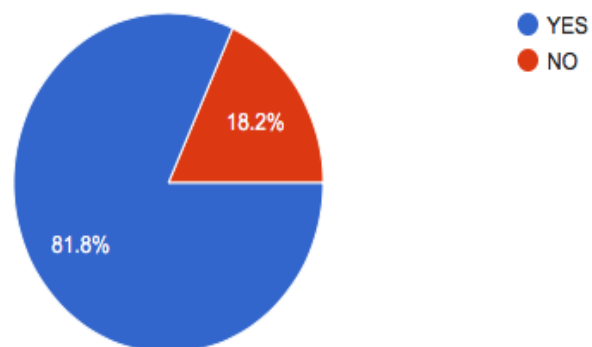


Table B-1

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about my White identity

11 responses

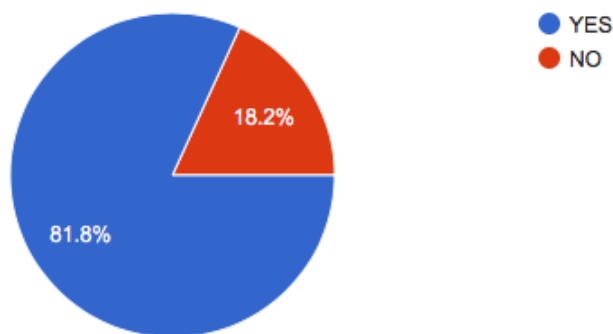


Table B-2

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of racism

11 responses

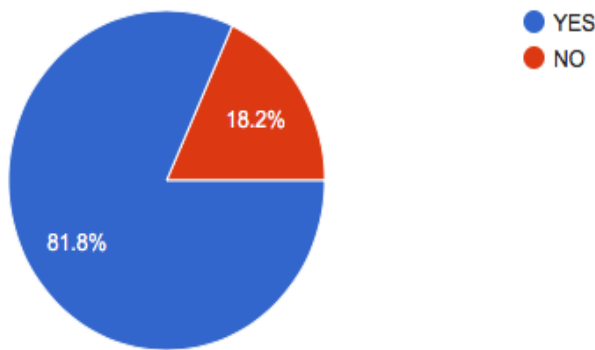


Table B-3

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of White privilege

11 responses

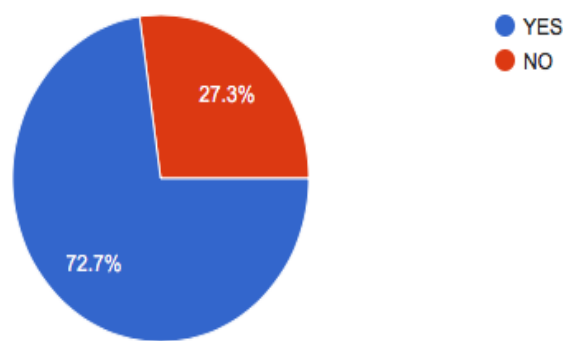


Table B-4

This course made me feel more prepared to effectively engage students in their own racial identities

11 responses

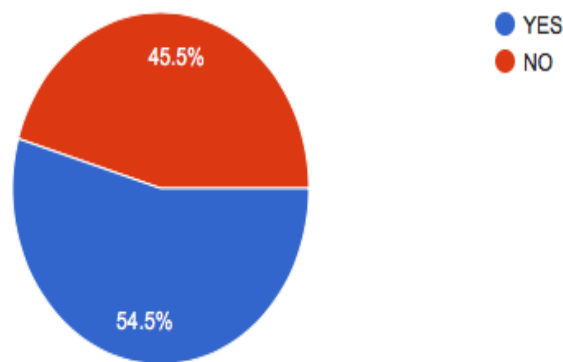


Table B-5

This course made me feel more prepared to engage in topics of racism and privilege

11 responses

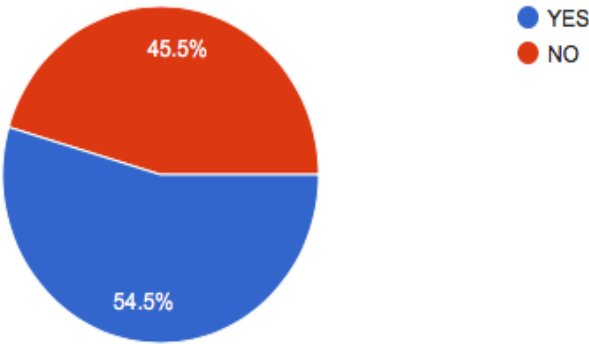


Table B-6

LS 394s:

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about racial groups other than my own

13 responses

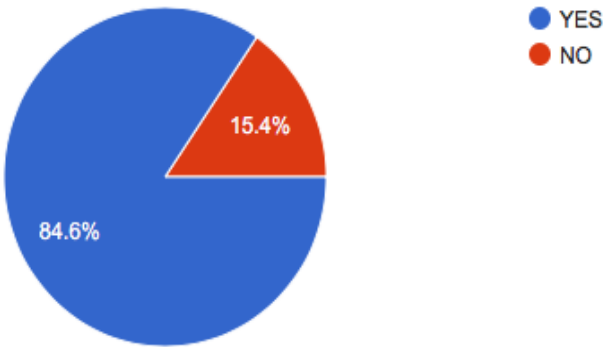


Table C-1

This course made me recognize and conceptually think about my White identity

13 responses

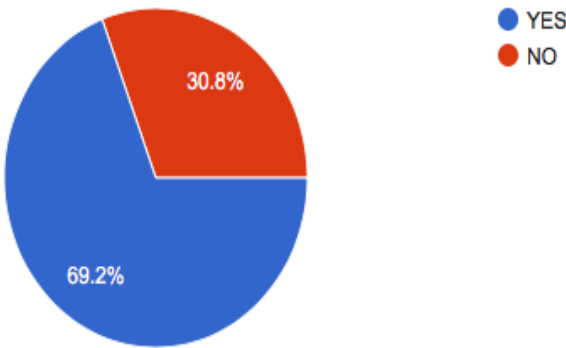


Table C-2

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of racism

13 responses

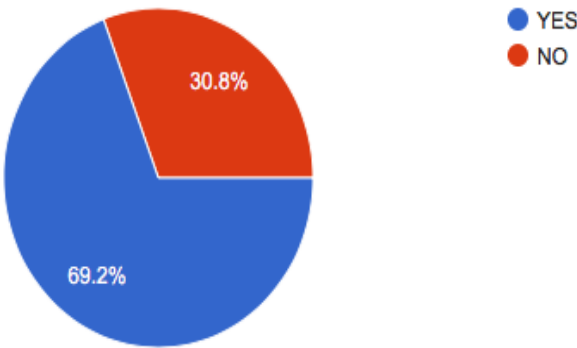


Table C-3

This course increased my awareness of the societal impacts of White privilege

13 responses

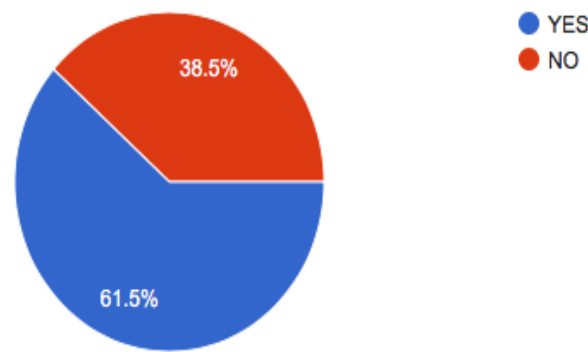


Table C-4

This course made me feel more prepared to effectively engage students in their own racial identities

13 responses

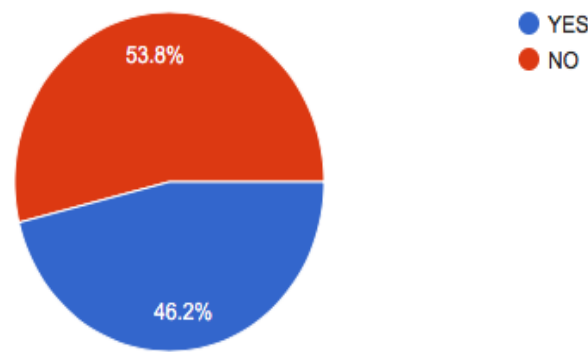


Table C-5

This course made me feel more prepared to engage in topics of racism and privilege

13 responses

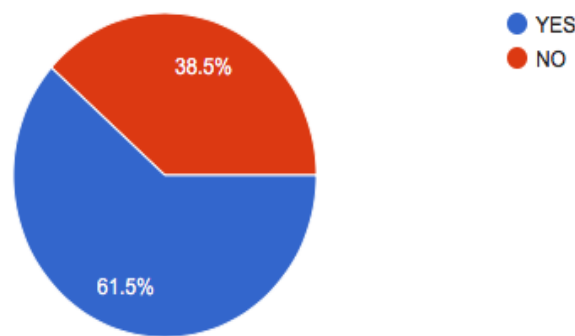


Table C-6

I feel I have taken enough courses here at CSUMB to prepare me to work effectively with students of color

13 responses

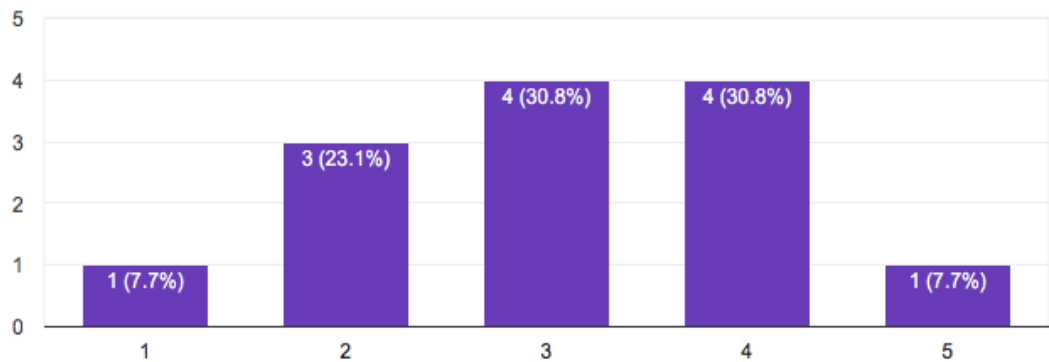


Table 6